

Tanagers Set For First HS Season YHS XC

From Page 7



Vermillion's Autumn Barnett (left)

BY ALAN DALE
The Plain Talk

High school girls' soccer in Vermillion has always been a fabric of the fall sports season.

In 2014 it just might mean a little bit more.

This season the Vermillion Tanager girls' soccer team will be a high school sanctioned sport and they will now enter the fray as a Class A squad and no longer will compete as a club team.

They played their first match on Aug. 21.

Sure they will still be a self-funded team as the school district will mainly give a stamp of approval if not a check to carry expenses, but regardless, the move is a landmark for the program.

"We are finally sanctioned we finally get to do this," senior goaltender Hailey Freidel said. "If we weren't sanctioned we probably wouldn't have had a soccer team at all this year. We are continuing to get better and we should be pretty good this year."

So far, so good.

On Thursday, Aug. 21, the Tanagers defeated defending Class A state club champions West Central, 3-2 at Cotton Park. The result of their Tues-

VHS GIRLS' SOCCER		
8/21	vs. West Central	W 3-2
8/26	vs. Tea Area	
8/28	at Garretson	
9/2	vs. S.F. Christian	6 p.m.
9/5	at West Central	5 p.m.
9/9	at S.F. Roosevelt	6 p.m.
9/11	at S.F. Christian	6 p.m.
9/13	at Tea Area	4 p.m.
9/15	vs. Garretson	6 p.m.
9/23	at Yankton	4 p.m.
9/30	Playoffs First Round	
10/4	Playoffs Semifinals	
10/11	State Finals at Mitchell	

day home match against Tea Area wasn't available at press time.

Junior Natasha Samudzi's 71st minute goal despite being outnumbered by Trojan defenders was enough to lead the Tanagers to the come-from-behind victory in the program's first ever sanctioned contest.

"West Central took us out of the playoffs last year and the girls wanted to get a little bit of revenge on their home field," Vermillion head coach Shannon Fitzsimmons said. "They came out here with confidence and desire to get that win."

Even when we fell behind we kept pushing forward knowing

VHS GIRLS | PAGE 9A

the hard work can push them forward as the season progresses.

"A weakness we have is that we don't necessarily have the team speed like the top teams do," he said.

The boys' field will be resilient this fall, according to Dannenbring.

"The boys' field is very tough this year," he said. "If we're not naturally better than someone, we will have to work harder than them. We need to race smart and rest properly. We really preach that we only need to be good one day out of the year, there are no playoffs."

The Gazelles may have lost a state winner, but there are some younger runners ready to make the leap.

Those girls are Savannah Woods, Maddi McClure, Lauren Graves, Tessa Folkers, Kristen Rezac, and Tristin Roy.

"We really need those girls to become leaders and take control this fall," Dannenbring said. "It's really tough to replace a state winner, like Kruse, but Woods was champion in 2012. It's not like she hasn't been there before. McClure will be right in the hunt this season. So, we will have two front runners again this season."

In practice, Dannenbring has seen his girls push as hard as they can, and have been advising so far.

"We've been holding the girls back a bit so far during practice," he said. "We have to race on race day. It's really easy to out and make it a race. We preach that you have to train, not strain, it's something we have been monitoring."

The Gazelles are very top heavy with runners, and Dannenbring finds strength in that.

"A strength we possess is that we have three very talented runners up front who all can win meets," he said.

He also is looking for runners to fill the rest of their roster.

"Something we need to work on is to find those four to seven girls who can step up, improve, and round out the team," Dannenbring said.

As a whole squad, the goal is to keep improving, and so far, Dannenbring has seen his team make strides as the season keeps going.

"A good thing is that we keep improving," he said. "We have it set that our training will make us peak on that last day, just need to wait for Oct. 25. It's tough to be patient; it gets a little emotionally draining at times."

There will be competition returning from all around the state. Some of the top tier teams should be: Sioux Falls Lincoln, Rapid City Stevens, and Harrisburg.

"Those teams can dominate and did last season," Dannenbring said. "I feel Harrisburg and Roosevelt will also have very successful seasons, as well."

Dannenbring wants to see his contestants succeed this fall.

"Our goal is to always be combined state champions," he said. "If not, we want a top three podium. We really want to be competitors and give it all that we have. That's all we can ask, the rest will fall into place."

Yankton will compete in the O'Gorman Invite today (Friday) in Sioux Falls.

You can follow Nick Robinson on Twitter at twitter.com/Robinsonick2013. Discuss this story at [yankton.net/sports](http://www.yankton.net/sports).

Young Tanager XC Squad Ready To Go

BY SCOTT BORMANN
For The Plain Talk

VERMILLION — The Vermillion High School bring a vast array of experiences and expectations to the impending cross country season.

VHS X-COUNTRY		
8/29	Beresford Inv.	10 a.m.
9/9	Canton Inv.	4 p.m.
9/19	Vermillion Inv.	3:45 p.m.
9/22	Alcester-Hudson Inv.	3:45 p.m.
9/25	Yankton Inv.	4:15 p.m.
10/3	Lennox Inv.	4 p.m.
10/9	Dakota XII Conf. (Lennox)	4 p.m.
10/16	Region 3A (Vermillion)	3 p.m.
10/25	State at Huron	1 p.m.

Both the boys and girls teams are looking to improve on last year's results, which will require individual improvements for team success.

The leaders of the team demonstrated their dedication in the offseason by putting in some miles, and even going to camp.

"It was fun and challenging," junior Katie Kost said about going to cross country camp in Mitchell with freshman Maddie Lavin. "We learned more about running."

When asked how many miles she ran this summer, Lavin, the defending State A cross country champion, held up her hand to indicate a zero.

"Oh, yeah," she said after a reminder from Kost. "At camp we did about a hundred."

Lavin's conditioning comes mainly from hours in the pool as a competitive swimmer.

Some of the runners had help a little closer to home.

"I had my brother as a running partner," senior Brittney Sweeney said of her summer secret. "We pushed each other to go faster."

The runners love the chance they have

of hosting the Region 3A meet on 16 Oct.

"It's nice to practice the day before and know your own course," Kost said. "Hopefully we can represent Vermillion well. We want to improve on last year. I know we came in last in regions, and we don't want that again."

Lavin's personal goals are lofty, yet straightforward.

"I want to do better than last year, improve my time from last year," she said, "and hopefully regain my title."

All the top girls' teams that are on their radar are from the Dakota XII Conference.

"The best teams should be Madison, Canton, Beresford" Lavin said of the girls' field. "And if we run against them, Yankton."

The Tanagers will be competing in the Yankton Invitational on Sept. 19, which should provide a very high level of competition for these harriers.

Kost and Lavin teamed up to list the top girls from a very strong field that they will face this year. The girls cited both Hailey and Cami Streff from Madison, Halie McMains from Canton, and a runners from Rapid City and St. Thomas More.

The boys' competition seems much less crowded at the top of the field.

"The kid from Madison is pretty good," junior Nolan McQuistan said of who to look out for in the boys races. "He's really tall."

Most of the boys' team is in middle school, so their youth is very apparent.

"We will be very inexperienced heading into the Beresford meet," Head Coach Kelly Fischbach said of Friday's opening meet. "But that will be a great learning spot for us."

Led by the individual efforts of one of the best distance runners in the entire state, the Tanagers' girls' cross country team expect to built on her success and bring home more glory for Vermillion.

The boys' team will be competing hard, and with their youth, anything can happen this season.



Vermillion's Maddie Lavin

Softball

From Page 7A

seniors last season and have six returning letter winners, Andi Sprakel, Jaclyn Arens, Heather Hauer, Madison Dangler, Kelsey Hovorka, and Bailey Kortan.

"We have nine girls back that got a lot of valuable experience on the JV team last year, Danielle Schmidt, Danielle Dvorak, Liz Suing, Lexie McCorkell, Savannah Steffen, Maddie Henrickson, Merlye Mason, Alix Peterka, and Bailey Peterka," Goeden said. "The will be vying for varsity time."

Six freshmen girls are moving up from the middle school team they were on last season, Bailey Sejnoha, Britney Davis, Holly Mines, Ashlynn Schwarz, Megan McCorkell, and Bridget Nolz. "We also have a couple of newcomers to the program,



Yankton's Jaclyn Arens

Alex Duncan and Ciara Kuhlavy, who are working hard in practice to improve and add depth to the team," Go-

den said. The Gazelle seniors will be looked to for leadership, Sprakel, Arens, Hauer, and

Dangler, Goeden said. "Sprakel and Arens have really stepped forward helping the younger girls along," he said. "It has been nice to see Andi become more vocal at practice this year. I hope it carries over to the games."

Corner defense is where the Gazelles will be looking to improve, in the positions of first base, rightfield, third base and leftfield.

"We have quite a few girls working hard to win these starting positions," Goeden said. "We are also looking to improve at the catcher's position where we are young and inexperienced at the varsity level."

As far as batting goes, the Gazelles will be competitive at the start of the lineup, Goeden said.

"The top of our lineup should be pretty solid as long as we are patient at the plate," he said.

The second half does not have as much varsity experience.

"We will have a lot of younger girls filling out the lineup that just need to get some experience and confidence," Goeden said.

Some friendly competition is going on to get all the positions filled, Goeden added.

"Right now probably only three or four positions are set with a lot of good competition going on for the others. We just need to see how some perform in games," he said. "There will be a lot of moving girls around, trying to figure out where everyone fits the best."

Goeden has a strong game plan for the upcoming season.

"We will need our pitchers to keep the ball out of the middle of the plate and we will need to play good defense to be competitive this year," he said. "We will also need our hitters to be patient at the plate and have quality at bats every time they step in the box. We have the potential to be a pretty good offensive team, once we get a little more game experience and confidence."

You can follow Adrienne Kusek on Twitter at twitter.com/AdrienneKusek. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

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